

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 JIDDA 03511 190929Z

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ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 INR-07 L-02 OES-03 /026 W

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R 190650Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1265

S E C R E T JIDDA 3511

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, PFOR, SA, US

SUBJECT: NUNN-BAKER CAMERA SURVEY TEAM

REF: STATE 107960

SUMMARY:

IN VIEW OF CLOSE SAUDI-US RELATIONS WE DO NOT THINK IT UNREASONABLE TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO ESTABLISH A SMALL DEFENSE-RELATED TECHNICAL INSTALLATION IN THE KINGDOM. AT THE SAME TIME, IT WILL REPRESENT A NEW DEPARTURE IN OUR RELATIONS OF THE PAST FEW YEARS AND POSE A NUMBER OF DIFFICULTIES. WE ARE OPPOSED TO MAKING A TWO-STAGE OR PIECEMEAL APPROACH TO THE SAUDIS. THEY WILL BE SUSPICIOUS OF THE REQUEST AND WE SHOULD BE PREPARED AT THE OUTSET TO GIVE THEM AS MUCH INFORMATION AS THEY WOULD BE LIKELY TO NEED OR WANT. BEFORE MAKING AN APPROACH, WE WOULD LIKE THE ANSWERS TO A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS, INCLUDING THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT IS ONLY THAT STATED REFTEL OR A DESCRIPTION OF ANY OTHER PROJECT GOALS.

END SUMMARY.

1. WE THINK THAT A REQUEST TO ASSIGN 25 TO 40 AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL TO SAUDI ARABIA EVEN TO PERFORM FUNCTIONS OF BENEFIT ONLY TO US SECURITY INTERESTS, IS

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PAGE 02 JIDDA 03511 190929Z

REASONABLE IN VIEW OF CLOSE AND COOPERATIVE SAUDI-US

RELATIONS. AT THE SAME TIME WE THINK THE DEPARTMENT WILL AGREE THAT IN THE SAUDI ARABIAN CONTEXT THIS WILL NOT BE ANY INSIGNIFICANT REQUEST. IN TERMS OF OUR RELATIONS OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS IT WILL ALSO BE A NEW DEPARTURE. WE DO NOT NOW HAVE AMERICANS STATIONED HERE PERFORMING FUNCTIONS NOT CLEARLY RELATED TO OUR JOINT DEFENSE INTERESTS. MOREOVER, WHILE 40 AMERICANS COULD BE ABSORBED IN THE DHAHRAN AREA--THOUGH NOT WITHOUT SOME STRAIN ON THE TIGHT HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION SITUATION--THAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE WOULD BE HIGHLY VISIBLE AND MIGHT POSE UNIQUE COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROBLEMS AT AL HUFUF.

2. BEFORE WE RAISE THIS QUESTION WITH THE SAG WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

(A) IS THE PURPOSE OF THE NUNN-BAKER CAMERA TEAM ONLY THAT OUTLINED REFTEL? THE SAUDIS WILL BE FRANKLY SUSPICIOUS OF THIS REQUEST IN THE CLIMATE CREATED BY THE "INVASION THREATS" ABOUT WHICH THEY STILL HAVE SOME NERVOUSNESS. IF THE GROUP DOES HAVE ANY OTHER PURPOSE, WHETHER OR NOT RELATED TO SAUDI ARABIA, WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT IT. MOREOVER, WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE PREPARED TO TELL THE SAUDIS ABOUT IT. IF WE HAVE BEEN LESS THAN HONEST WITH THE SAUDIS AND SOMETHING WERE TO COME OUT LATER--ALWAYS A CONSIDERATION IN VIEW OF RECENT LEAKS--OUR CREDIBILITY WOULD BE SERIOUSLY DAMAGED AND THE HARM DONE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY OUT WEIGH THE BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE INSTALLATION.

(B) IN MAKING OUR APPROACH, WE WILL HAVE TO GIVE THE SAG ALL THE INFORMATION IN REFTEL AND MORE. WE DO NOT THINK IT WOULD BE WISE TO TELL THE SAUDIS THAT WE WILL FIRST DO A SURVEY AND THEN TELL THEM WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT. IN ADDITION TO MORE TECHNICAL INFORMATION, CAN THE DEPARTMENT ALSO PROVIDE DETAILS OF HOW THE INFORMATION DERIVED FROM AN INSTALLATION IN SAUDI ARABIA WILL FIT INTO THE U.S. DEFENSE PICTURE AND THAT OF THE FREE WORLD?

(C) ARE THERE NO OTHER SUITABLE LOCATIONS IN THE KINGDOM  
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PAGE 03 JIDDA 03511 190929Z

OTHER THAN DHAHRAN AND AL HUFUF? THE SAUDIS WILL BE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO A US MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE WHICH IS NOT RELATED DIRECTLY TO COMMON DEFENSE INTERESTS. COULD THE INSTALLATION BE LOCATED, FOR INSTANCE, IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF RIYADH--WHERE IT WOULD INCIDENTLY BE EASIER TO MAINTAIN?

(D) CAN WE ASSURE THE SAUDIS THAT THEY WILL HAVE FULL

ACCESS TO ANY INSTALLATION SET UP--INCLUDING COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES? IF WE CANNOT ASSURE THEM OF THIS WE JUDGE OUR CHANCES OF OBTAINING SAUDI AGREEMENT TO BE SLIM.

(E) CAN WE INVITE SAUDIS TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE PROJECT FROM THE BEGINNING, INCLUDING CONDUCTING THE SURVEY. WE WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SAUDI SCIENTIFIC PERSONNEL TO GAIN EXPERIENCE IN A NEW FIELD.

(F) DOES THIS PROJECT HAVE TO BE CONDUCTED BY MILITARY PERSONNEL FO THE AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND (WHICH WILL HAVE A MENACING SOUND TO SAUDIS)? COULD IT NOT BE DONE BY CIVILIANS FROM THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION? WE MIGHT THEN ENLIST SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT FROM CIVILIAN SCIENTISTS WHO WOULD LIKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH THIS PRESTIGIOUS CIVILIAN ORGANIZATION.

3. WE ARE PREPARED TO PUSH THIS PROJECT AT WHATEVER LEVEL THE DEPARTMENT THINKS THE PROJECT WARRANTS. WE DO NOT WISH TO DO SO, HOWEVER, UNTIL WE HAVE ANSWERS TO THE FOREGOING QUESTIONS. MOST OF THEM ARE QUESTIONS THE SAUDI ARE SURE TO ASK AND IF WE ARE FORCED TO PROVIDE ANSWERS PIECEMEAL IT IS LIKELY TO AROUSE SUSPICIONS ABOUT OUR CANDOR.

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** buchant0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 20 AUG 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <20 AUG 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <04 DEC 2003 by buchant0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** NUNN-BAKER CAMERA SURVEY TEAM  
**TAGS:** MARR, PFOR, SA, US  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006